

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Erika Williams and I have been a homecare provider for 2 years. I'm here today to testify on the need to fund a workers' compensation insurance policy for PCA homecare workers like me.

I came to homecare because I felt like this was my passion. I like taking care of the elderly, and hope to do this work long term. I want to go further in this career and eventually become a phlebotomist, but right now I'm happy doing homecare.

Today, I care for a client who has a lot of needs. She recently came home from rehab and is 85 years old. I bathe her, prepare meals, wash clothes, clean her house, groom her, and do her vital signs. I assist her by walking behind her to make sure she doesn't fall, and I catch her if she does. If my client didn't have someone like me caring for her, she would need to be cared for in a facility. However, she is adamant about staying home and I'm happy to help her do so.

However, there are serious challenges to this job. Because we lack workers' comp insurance, I am left vulnerable in 2 ways: first, If I get hurt on the job, I have no way to care for myself. Second, the lack of workers' comp means that state law says I cannot work more than 25.75 hours per week, which means I'm forced to decide between making ends meet on less than \$1200 a month and getting a second job which would limit the time I can spend with my son.

Last year, I slipped and fell on my client's ramp and fell right on my back. I laid there for a few minutes and then returned to my shift. I later went to the health clinic and they told me that I needed to be on bed rest for a week. However, as the only source of income in my household, I couldn't care for my son if I took the week off -- so I just took Advil and went straight back to work.

Testimony of Erika Williams  
Appropriations Committee  
Feb. 11, 2016

To this day, the pain makes it hard to do my job. Sometimes, my client doesn't want to get in the shower, so I have to bathe her while she sits on the toilet. Even a year after the injury, that kind of motion is a huge strain on my back. Even lifting or putting away groceries can set off my pain. Also, if I had taken the week off, my client's daughter would've needed to take the week off from her own job, which would have been a hardship for their family, as well. If I had had workers' comp insurance, I could have taken the time to get better and not worried about being able to pay my bills. I worry now about reinjuring my back as her needs increase.

In addition to being left vulnerable to injury, the other impact of not having workers' comp insurance is that we cannot work more than 25.75 hours per week. My client receives 44 hour per week total, but since she can't hire me for more than 25.75, she has to hire multiple aides and I am just left with one part-time job. My rent went up recently which has become a hardship, and I need to get a second job so I'm not in the position of having to face eviction. Also, my son is a high school student, and there are weeks when even giving him the \$10 to take the bus to school, or paying for activity fees for him, is a challenge.

I want to continue doing this work, but to do so we need to be assured that our health and safety is protected while we ensure that health and safety of our clients. Also, if our clients had the ability to hire us for more than 25.75 hours per week, we could all gain a greater level of financial stability, which is only fair for someone who works as hard as we all do.

Thank for your consideration.

Erika Williams  
31 Ridge Ct East  
West Haven, CT